



**Women, gender, transnational migrations
and mobility.
State of the art, France**

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Working Paper No. 4 – WP4

2008

**Integration of Female Immigrants in Labour Market and Society.
Policy Assessment and Policy Recommendations
A Specific Targeted Research Project of the 6th
Framework Programme of the European Commission**



1. This brief overview¹ focuses primarily on publications appeared in France in the past ten-fifteen years and points to existing gaps in research. These publications reflect the changes triggered off by the fall of communism and the end of the bipolar world, by increasing globalisation, transnationalisation and feminisation of flows.

But, in order to avoid being trapped by the discourse on “re-thinking of migration”, on “new trends” and “discoveries” (and take for granted, for instance that “feminisation of migration is a new phenomenon”- an assertion that we can commonly read, not only in France), we cannot ignore the preceding debates and will therefore refer also to the production of knowledge which has shaped the present very interesting and multi-faceted output. In other words, in order to understand what appears to be a new trend or takes place differently under new circumstances, it is important to underscore continuities.

2. The pioneering works of the seventies and the eighties on women in migration appeared in the context marked by a male bias in mainstream migration studies, themselves marginalized in social sciences. Women were absent or invisible and one of the objectives of these first studies was to point to the diversity of situations against the misleading stereotypes and representations which imposed a global unified picture of exclusively masculine migration. Providing statistical evidence (Wisniewski, 1975, Taravella 1978), focusing on labour market participation (Morokvasic 1976, Paperman and Pierot 1978), was necessary to make migrant women visible in the context in which the focus was primarily on labour migration and where migrant was “legitimate” as a worker only. The feminist questioning about women in the society indirectly provided an undeniable impetus to the studies on women in migration. However, the mainstream feminism and studies on social relations of gender (“rapports sociaux de sexe”) remained for a long time ethnicity- and migration-blind. They had other priorities and focused on what they considered as primordial domination. The voice of migrant women themselves further contributed to their own visibilisation (“Les femmes immigrées parlent” 1978). In the seventies the migration context changed: the labour recruitment suspended in 1974 was followed by family immigration and focus shifted from migrant worker to migrant family and to women-and-children. Several studies more or less directly responding to public policy demand focused on integration issues adopting a culturalist perspective, focusing on migrant women as mediators in adoption of and adaptation to the French society values (Taboada-Leonetti and Levy 1979). Whereas the studies in this period contributed to the awareness raising about the presence of immigrant women in French society, they also contributed to forging and maintaining a stereotype of women isolated, illiterates, non adapted to modern society and in need of assistance. The emerging structures providing assistance functioned with this stereotype as self-fulfilling prophecy – they needed “problem-burdened, helpless, isolated women, lost in the modern urban world” in order to survive themselves.

¹ The longer version of this paper will be published in the Conference proceedings of the meeting organized by the Institute of Sociology, Jagiellonian University, Department of Population Studies in Krakow 15-16 November 2007, “Among Us or Close to Us? The Female Immigrants’ Situation in Poland in the Context of Polish and European Migration Policy “.

In the eighties, with the fast development of associative movement among immigrants and the coming of age of the “second generation” as intercultural mediators, social workers, organized in their own associations contributed to modifying of the prevalent image focusing on women as “actors” (Morokvasic 1983 etc).

These are some of the main facets of the literature in the period preceding the one we will focus on. One can call it a “compensatory stage”, it aimed at providing evidence about immigrant women there where they were either absent or represented in a reductionist way.² For a retrospective view see Morokvasic (2008).

3. In the beginning of the nineties the European migration landscape changes: the flows are more and more diversified, the regions of departure and arrival often overlapping, European Union proceeds to selective inclusion and exclusion of newcomers, etc. (Wihtol de Wenden and De Tinguy 1995). The production of knowledge we are focusing now at, takes place in a very different context, more favourable to the problematic of women and migration:

- The migration issues are no longer marginalised in social sciences or limited to the concern of local policy makers. More than ever they are on the agenda of public policy makers not only at local and national level but also at the European and international level.
- This context is also marked by gender-mainstreaming which necessarily facilitates the output as well as its reception and impact.
- The French feminists (mainstream) who were for a long time reluctant to contextualizing the social relations of gender, who already had a serious problem with “class” and were divided on the issue of class and gender, finally opened up and took over the already existing discussion on the articulation of gender, class, ethnicity.
- World-wide interest, accumulation of studies, publications in referee journals and among leading publishers set up standards of reference and excellence, non existent ten-fifteen years ago (Mathilde Darley’s article on prostitution clubs in the border region of the Czech Republic is coming out shortly in the top French journal *Revue Française de sociologie*, 2007). This context has had a considerable impact on research in France, and in turn one can expect that research will influence further research and have more impact on policies than in a context where the problematic was marginalized, studies were scarce and limited to specialized journals and to a small circle of engaged sociologists and political activists.

Before presenting the topics covered, here are some transversal observations :

- In the past decade a number of comprehensive overviews of literature and special issues have been produced, here a non exhaustive list in a chronological order: Barison and Catarino 1997; Golub, Morokvasic, Quiminal interview 1997; Falquet, Goldberg, Zaidman 2000; Zaidman, in

² One can refer to the overviews of literature (Morokvasic 1976, 1983).

coll. with Bachelet 2003; Catarino, Morokvasic, Hilly 2005; Rigoni and Sehili 2005; Falquet et al. 2008).

- Gender perspective becomes necessary, when not even compulsory. It is however not yet self-evident: the gender lens is for instance missing in the 20th anniversary issue of the REMI – *Revue européenne des migrations internationales* (Volume 22, n°2, 2006). It seems that the mainstream migration scholars still think that it is possible to speak about integration or about asylum and human rights, or about transnationalism and cosmopolitanism or present the patterns and trends of migration in Europe since the mid-1990s – without reference to gender. And yet this outstanding journal has recently devoted a special issue to the subject (“Femmes, genre, migrations et mobilité”, Volume 21, n° 1, 2005) and had already earlier covered “Emploi, genre et migration” (Volume 15, n°2, 1999).
- It follows from the above that migration researchers from time to time pay a lip service to gender by focusing on women. Therefore, it could be argued that as long as the gender bias exists, the compensatory perspective focusing on women only will be necessary - although we know that the gender perspective cannot be limited to that.
- In spite of the accumulation of knowledge and wide distribution of studies the weight of stereotyping and of misleading representations is still widespread. They used to be an easy cover-ups for existing gaps and ignorance. Today, although the availability of research evidence and data should make resorting to them irrelevant, the focus remains on migrant women in the reproductive sphere and in public policies on their status as victims.
- In the context of globalisation and changing migration patterns, the focus of research is seldom today “Franco-French” – on France only. Rather, migrations are increasingly approached as transnational phenomena, involving more than one or two countries. Besides French scholars shift their gaze to phenomena also beyond France, to other countries, continents even. In the increasingly globalized world social sciences have to “globalize” themselves – not in order to abandon the Nation-state logic but to combine, include the transnational and trans-state developments.

4. The research in France in the recent decade focuses on the following issues:

- o Recurrences of discovery: “new” issue (Chaib 2003a, 2003b, Zaidman 2003, etc). The need to discover, to go into the ritual of “the topic is marginalized, we do not know anything” to claim that feminisation of migration is new, etc.
- o Diversified patterns of migration and transnational(Potot 2005, Schmoll 2005, Nedelcu 2005, Manry 2005, Manry and Schmoll 2005, Morokvasic 2004)
- o Spatial mobility and social mobility (Mozère 2006, Oso 2005, Nedelcu 2005, Ramírez 1999)

- o Integration (Hersent 2003, Lillo 2003)
- o Neutral policies – gender effects (Morokvasic et Catarino 2007, Comité d'action interassociatif « Droit des femmes, droit au séjour, contre la double violence » 2004, Lesselier 2003, 2006, Freedman 2003)
- o Mobilisations, associative movements (Schwenken 2005, Quiminal 1996, Feldman 2005, Lemerrier 2005, Laurain 2005)
- o Strategies of migration, women as actors (Sengel 2005, Giabiconi 2005a and 2005b, Rotkirch 2005, Le Espiritu 2005)
- o Intersectionality (Falquet, Lada et Rabaut 2006, Poiret 2005, Kebabza 2005, Catarino 1999)
- o The underside of globalisation:
Domestic service and care (Puech 2006, Mozère 2005, Scrinzi 2003, Oso 2003, Ouali 2003, Miranda 2003, Ramírez 1999, Catarino 1999);
Industrial sector (Borgeaud Garciandia 2006);
The sexual market (matrimonial practices, prostitution and trafficking): Sengel (2005), Giabiconi (2005a, 2005b), Falquet (2006, 2005), prostitution (Deschamps 2006, Oso 2006, Handman and Mossuz-Lavaux 2005, Moujoud 2005), trafficking (Morokvasic 2006, Guillemaut 2006, Andrijasevic 2005).

5. Gaps in research

- Transnational perspective, although more and more present does not always include a gender perspective .
- Studies should focus on men AND women (labour insertion, transnational parenthood, social construction of masculinity and femininity in migration and correlative social identifications, etc.). Studies should cover some less explored areas and sectors: unskilled mixed-gender activities (garment industry...), highly feminised unskilled occupations (cleaning activities...) and highly skilled and with tertiary education, business creation.
- Monographs focusing on one community are interesting because they provide in- depth perspective that some transversal studies cannot do. One could imagine comparative studies of the same immigrant group in two or more destination countries (for instance Chinese in an “old” France or Germany and “new” destination country as Spain or Hungary; Latin Americans or Eastern Europeans are two other groups which have been investigated extensively in one country (Latin Americans in Spain, Eastern Europeans in Germany), but not comparatively).
- Comparative research can also focus on some issues. For instance investigate the headscarf issue in France, Germany and UK (i.e. in three different conceptions of nation state and identity). And more generally, one should ask what place women immigrants occupy in these presumed

different “models” of integration? How are women strategically used, referred to, to represent a certain idea of the nation or of ethnic groups?

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